# SURVEY OF VETERANS' SATISFACTION WITH THE VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROCESS

# **2001 National Results Regional Loan Centers**



Surveys and Research Staff
Data Management Office
Veterans Benefits Administration

**April 2002** 

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**Executive Summary** 

### **Project Objectives**

- To measure veterans' satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Guaranty process at both the national and VBA Regional Loan Center (RLC) levels.
- To identify areas of the VA Home Loan Guaranty process which are most satisfying to veterans, areas of the process which are least satisfying to veterans, and areas of the process which are in greatest need of improvement.
- To determine where improvements to the VA Home Loan Guaranty process will have the greatest impact on veterans' satisfaction.
- To create performance measures, including measures of customer service, through a strategic planning process, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) that was passed and signed into law in August 1993.
- To establish an explicit goal for the quality of service that is "equal to the best in business" as described in President Clinton's Executive Order 12862, *Setting Customer Service Standards*, issued in September 1993. This order was aimed at "ensuring that the Federal Government provides the highest quality of service possible to the American people."

### **Project Methodology**

- This report presents results from the second administration of the *Survey of Veterans'*Satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Guaranty Process. The data represent statically valid measurements of various elements of customer satisfaction.
- The annual mail survey assesses veterans' satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Guaranty process using a random sample of loans closed during March 1 through July 31, 2001, from the nine Regional Loan Centers.
- For each regional office, the survey sample contained approximately 1,600 veterans, with an equal mix of original or refinanced loans. Approximately 870 questionnaires were returned from each regional office, resulting in a national response rate of 56%.
- When necessary, results are weighted to compensate for differences in loan type. A more detailed discussion of the survey methodology appears in Appendix B.

Note: The words veterans, customers, and respondents are used interchangeably throughout the report and represent all possible respondents.

### **Project History**

- As part of this project, VBA's Surveys and Research Staff conducted four focus groups with veterans and front-line employees to gather information relevant to customer satisfaction issues.
- From the focus group data, the VBA designed and developed a questionnaire to assess customer satisfaction with the Home Loan Guaranty process. This original survey was pretested from March to April 2000. Based on the results, the skip patterns, and the verbatim responses of the pretest, the VBA Surveys and Research Staff modified the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire was revised for the current survey administration period (2001); changes were made to the Appraisal section in order to obtain more relevant information. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix D.

### **Report Highlights**

#### Trends:

#### Certificate of Eligibility

• Respondents who received their Certificate of Eligibility (COE) in a short period of time indicated that the length of time to get their COE was more reasonable than those who waited longer to receive their COE.

#### **Modes of Contact**

• Respondents who visited a VA Regional Loan Center or Regional Office are slightly more satisfied than those who called the VA toll-free number in terms of having their questions fully addressed, and of receiving the information they needed.

#### Realtor and Lender

- Respondents' overall satisfaction with the home loan process increases as their level of satisfaction with the realtor or lender increases.
- The realtor's lack of knowledge and unresponsiveness affect overall satisfaction more than the lender's. However, both lack of knowledge and unresponsiveness do not dramatically increase dissatisfaction with the home loan process.

#### **Appraisal**

- Respondents' overall satisfaction with the home loan process increases as their level of satisfaction with the appraised value of their property increases.
- Respondents who are dissatisfied with the professionalism of the appraiser are much less satisfied with the appraised value of their property.

#### Loan Approval

- Respondents who received their loan approval in less than four weeks had higher levels of overall satisfaction than respondents whose loan approval took longer.
- The largest proportion of respondents received their loan approval in less than two weeks and the largest proportion feel that less than two weeks is the most reasonable amount of time to wait for loan approval.
- Respondents who feel their lenders are unresponsive and show poor knowledge tend to experience a longer number of weeks to get their loan approval.

### **Report Highlights (continued)**

#### Response Rate:

 A response rate of 56 percent resulted in 7,857 completed questionnaires from veterans served by the nine Regional Loan Centers nationally.

#### **Demographics:**

Most respondents were men (91 percent), and most were between the ages of 36 and 45 years (32 percent).

#### **Background:**

- A total of 34 percent reported first learning about the VA home loan guaranty program from pre-discharge briefings (TAP/DTAP).
- Most (88 percent) felt the information they received was very or somewhat accurate.
- Overall, 69 percent of the respondents reported mostly or completely understanding the dollar amount of the loan the VA would guarantee.

#### **Modes of Contact:**

• Respondents were asked what methods they used to contact the VA about their loan. Veterans were most likely to report that they faxed, e-mailed, or wrote to reach the VA (26 percent), while 24 percent phoned the VA and 12 percent visited the VA.

#### Certificate of Eligibility (COE):

• Overall, 46 percent obtain their COE through the mail and 80 percent of the respondents felt the amount of time it took to get the COE was very or somewhat reasonable.

#### Realtor:

71 percent used a realtor and 85 percent reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the realtor.

#### Lender:

• 90 percent reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the lender.

#### Appraisal:

• 72 percent reported having an appraisal and 77 percent reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the appraisal of their property.

#### **Overall Impressions:**

• Overall, 94 percent of veterans reported being somewhat or very satisfied with the VA home loan process.

### Results from Quadrant Analysis: Quadrants I and II

- Quadrant analysis is a useful tool for determining which individual performance areas need improvement in order to raise the overall quality of service. The analysis involves determining the importance of individual performance areas (how meaningful an area is to the veteran) and VA's performance in each area. Generally, items with high importance but relatively low performance deserve immediate attention. (See the Quadrant Analysis section of this report for greater detail of these results.)
- Areas of **strengths** of services were defined as those which were highly correlated with veterans' overall satisfaction with the handling of the claim, and which were rated by respondents as being well-performed by the staff providing claims service. For the Quadrant Analysis section, the strengths were:

#### **Strengths: Quadrant II Results**

Information you received was very or somewhat accurate.

VA employees were very or somewhat courteous on the phone.

VA fully addressed all your questions, concerns, or complaints on the phone.

VA employees were very or somewhat courteous during your in-person visit.

Amount of time it took to get your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) was very or somewhat reasonable.

The realtor was very or somewhat responsive regarding inquiries about your VA home loan.

Very or somewhat satisfied with your realtor.

The lender was very or somewhat courteous.

The lender's knowledge about the VA home loan guaranty program was excellent or very good.

The lender was very or somewhat responsive regarding inquiries about your VA home loan.

Information about the VA home loan guaranty program from your lender was very or somewhat easy to get.

Very or somewhat satisfied with your lender.

Very or somewhat satisfied with the appraised value of your property.

Very or somewhat satisfied with the appraisal of your property.

• Several other areas were noted as primary goals for **possible improvement** by staff of the VBA Office in order to increase claimant satisfaction. These areas were highly correlated with overall respondent satisfaction with the handling of the claim, but their current rating levels as reported by claimants revealed areas of concern or weakness in VBA's delivery of these specific services. In general, while a regional office may not be able to improve a given item (such as satisfaction with the claim decision), other items can be improved, with a resultant improvement in satisfaction. These include:

#### Possible Improvements: Quadrant I Results

Very or somewhat easy to get through to VA on the phone.

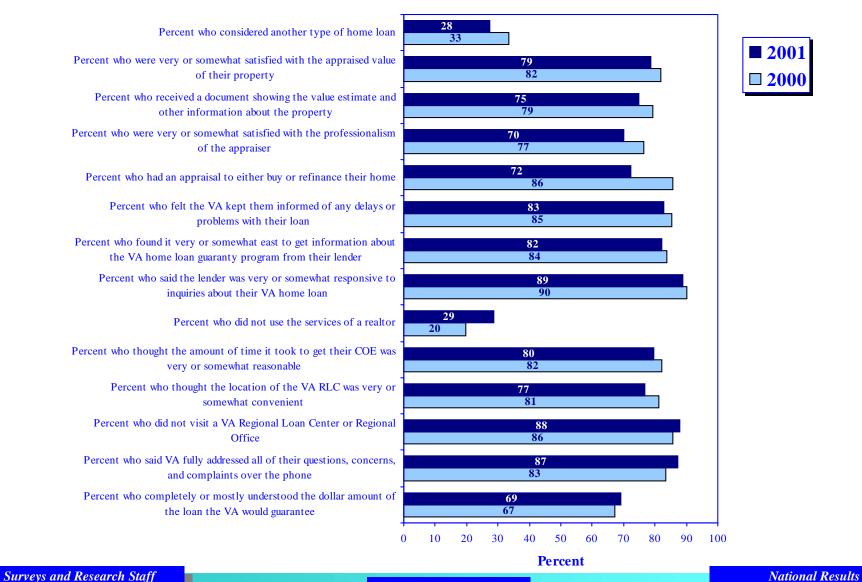
Got all or most of needed information from telephone contact with VA.

Very or somewhat satisfied with the professionalism of the appraiser.

I have excellent or very good knowledge of the VA home loan guaranty program.

### Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2000 vs. 2001

• The items shown here reflect true differences in performance over time. If an item does not appear, then performance did not significantly change between the years. Trends on the response rates appear in Appendix B.

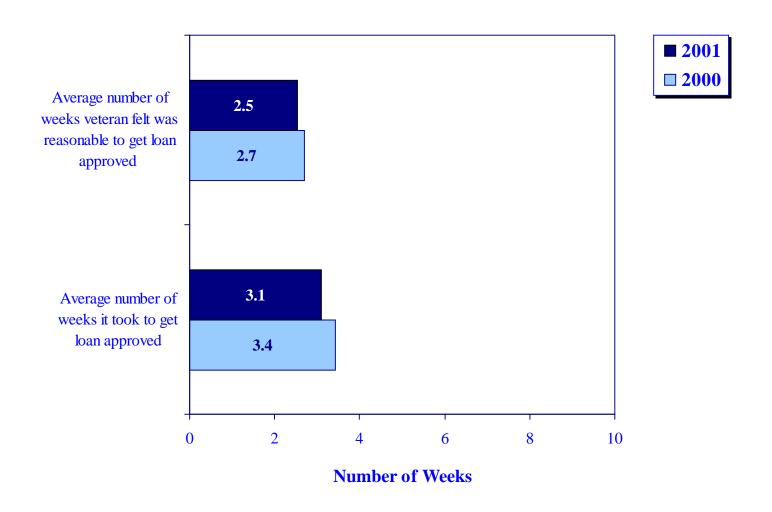


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### Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2000 vs. 2001



**Quadrant Analysis** 

### **Questions Used in Quadrant Analysis**

#### **Quadrant Questions**

#### **Background Information**

- **Q2** Got all or most of what you needed to know from your original source.
- Q3 Information you received was very or somewhat accurate.
- Q4 Completely or mostly understood the dollar amount of the loan the VA would guarantee.

#### **Phone Contact with VA**

- Q7 Very or somewhat easy to get through to VA on the phone.
- Q10 VA employees were very or somewhat courteous on the phone.
- Q11 VA fully addressed all your questions, concerns, or complaints on the phone.
- Q12 Got all or most of needed information from telephone contact with VA.
- Q13 Got information about particular loan from phone contact.

#### Visiting a VA RLC or RO

- Q17 Location of the VA Regional Loan Center was very or somewhat convenient.
- Q18 VA employees were very or somewhat courteous during your in-person visit.
- Q19 VA employees fully addressed all your questions, concerns, or complaints during your visit.
- Q20 Got all or most of needed information from in-person visit to VA office.

### **Questions Used in Quadrant Analysis (continued)**

#### **Quadrant Questions**

#### **Certificate of Eligibility**

- Q24 Amount of time it took to get your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) was very or somewhat reasonable.
- Q25 VA kept you informed of any delays or problems in obtaining your Certificate of Eligibility (COE).

#### Realtor

- Q27 The realtor was very or somewhat courteous.
- Q28 The realtor's KNOWLEDGE about the VA home loan guaranty program was excellent or very good.
- Q29 The realtor was very or somewhat responsive regarding inquiries about your VA home loan.
- Q30 Very or somewhat satisfied with your realtor.

#### Lender

- Q31 The lender was very or somewhat courteous.
- Q32 The lender's KNOWLEDGE about the VA home loan guaranty program was excellent or very good.
- Q33 The lender was very or somewhat responsive regarding inquiries about your VA home loan.
- Q34 Information about the VA home loan guaranty program from your lender was very or somewhat easy to get.
- Q35 The lender informed you of any delays or problems with your loan.
- Q38 Very or somewhat satisfied with your lender.

### **Questions Used in Quadrant Analysis (continued)**

### **Quadrant Questions**

#### **Appraisal**

- **Q41** Very or somewhat satisfied with the professionalism of the appraiser.
- **Q46** Very or somewhat satisfied with the appraised value of your property.
- **Q47** Very or somewhat satisfied with the appraisal of your property.

#### **Overall Impressions**

- Q48 I have excellent or very good knowledge of the VA home loan guaranty program.
- **Q54** I would recommend the VA home loan program to other veterans.

### **Understanding Quadrant Analysis**

- Quadrant analysis is a useful tool for determining which individual performance areas need improvement in order to raise the overall quality of service. The analysis involves determining the importance of individual performance areas (how meaningful an area is to the veteran) and VA's performance in each area. Generally, items with high importance but relatively low performance are those which deserve immediate attention.
- Each of the twenty-nine variables represented in the Quadrant Analysis graph are plotted on the basis of:
  - 1) Importance: a variable's correlation with the overall satisfaction with the process; and
  - 2) **Performance**: a variable's top-box percent (the percent of people who answered positively to the question).
- Variable correlations with *overall satisfaction with the process* are used to determine the degree to which variables are related to overall satisfaction. Zero indicates no correlation, and 1 indicates perfect correlation. The closer a variable's correlation (Importance) is to 1, the stronger that variable's relationship is with the overall satisfaction with the process. *Variables that have stronger correlations are considered to have higher importance*.
- Top-box percents represent how well VA is performing within a given area (for example, the percent who indicated that it was very or somewhat easy to get through to VA on the phone). *The higher the percent, the better VA is performing.*
- The quadrant analysis graph is divided into four quadrants (sections) based on the following combinations of the plotted location of a variable:

**Quadrant I: Critical Improvement Areas (high importance, low performance)** 

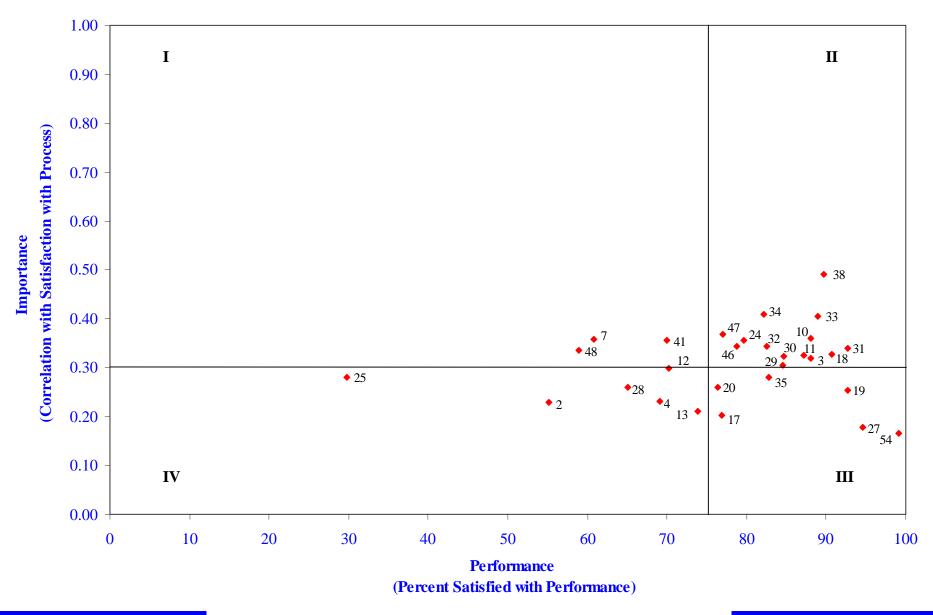
**Quadrant II: Maintain Relationship Building Variables (high importance, high performance)** 

**Quadrant III: Lower Return on High Performance (low importance, high performance)** 

**Quadrant IV: Lower Return on Investment (low importance, low performance)** 

- The horizontal line in the plot represents importance and is placed at .30, which indicates relatively high correlation and, thus, relatively high importance. The vertical line represents performance and is placed at 75 percent. The quadrant lines can be moved up or down, left or right, to include more or fewer items in each quadrant.
- To help interpret the graph that appears on the next page, see the Executive Summary for a list of items that fell into Quadrants I and II.
- It should be noted that quadrant analysis is only a typology used to determine where an organization might begin to improve service. Continuous improvement in all areas, given available resources, should be the ultimate goal.

### **Quadrant Analysis for 2001**

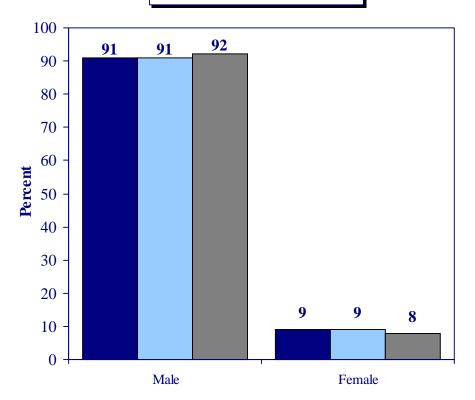


**Respondent Characteristics** 

### **Respondent Profiles by Gender and Age**

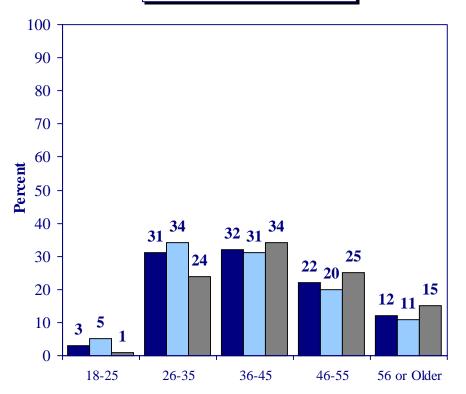
### **Gender Distribution**

- Total (N = 7,857)
- $\square$  Original Loan (N = 3,873)
- $\blacksquare$  Refinanced Loan (N = 3,984)



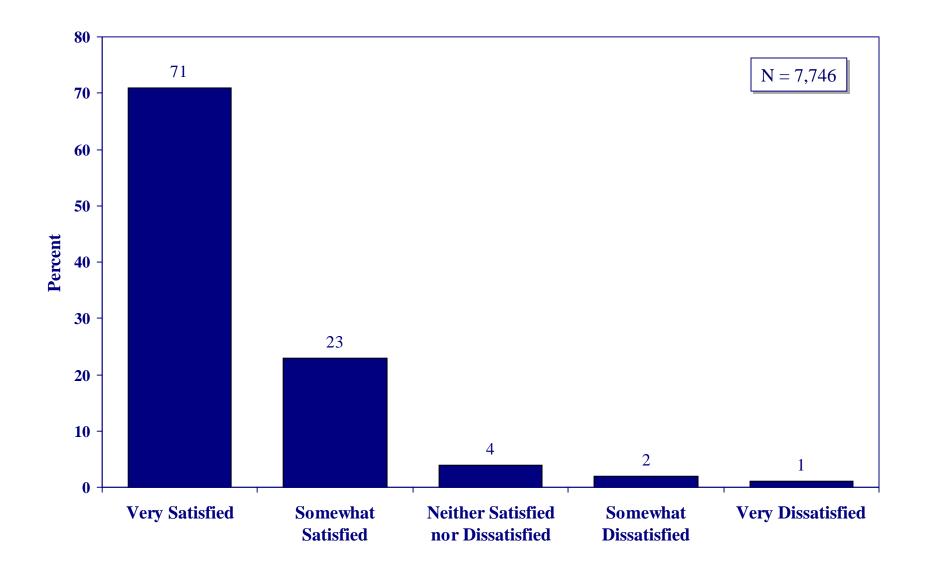
### **Age Distribution**

- Total (N = 7,857)
- $\square$  Original Loan (N = 3,873)
- $\blacksquare$  Refinanced Loan (N = 3,984)

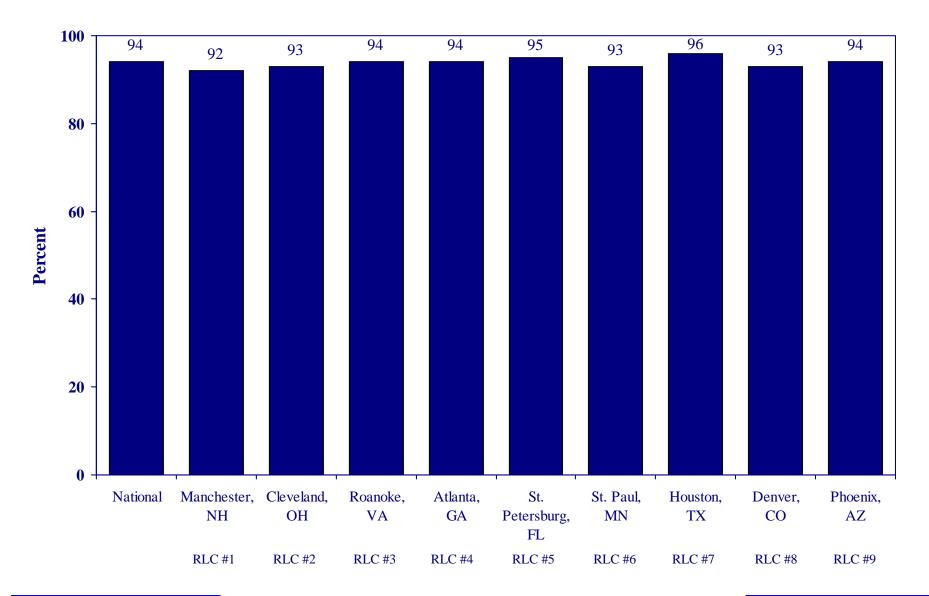


# Overall Satisfaction with VA Home Loan Process

### **Overall Satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Process**



### Percent Very or Somewhat Satisfied with the VA Home Loan Process



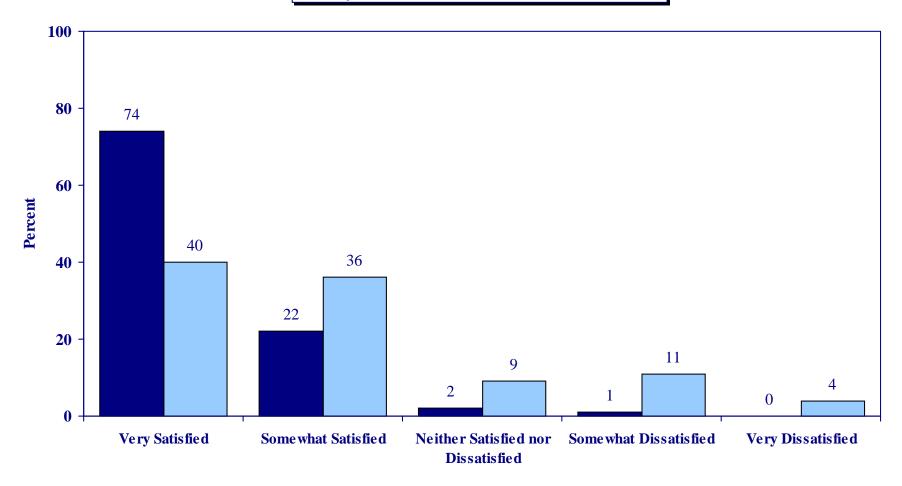
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### **Understanding Double Bar Charts**

- The following charts show the effect of key veteran experiences to the overall satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Guaranty process. These key experiences include the following:
  - Satisfaction with realtor
  - Satisfaction with realtor's knowledge
  - Satisfaction with realtor's responsiveness
  - Satisfaction with lender
  - Satisfaction with lender's knowledge
  - Satisfaction with lender's responsiveness
  - Amount of time taken to receive loan
  - Appraised value of property
- On each of the following charts, two distributions for the overall satisfaction with the home loan guaranty process are displayed along the horizontal axis. The dark shaded bars represent the overall satisfaction distribution for those veterans who were satisfied with the specific key experience. The light shaded bars represent the overall satisfaction distribution for those veterans who were dissatisfied with the specific key experience.
- The last chart shows the effect of the professionalism of the appraiser with the appraised value of the property.

#### Overall Satisfaction by Satisfaction with Realtor

- Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Realtor (N = 4,358)
- $\square$  Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied with Realtor (N = 301)

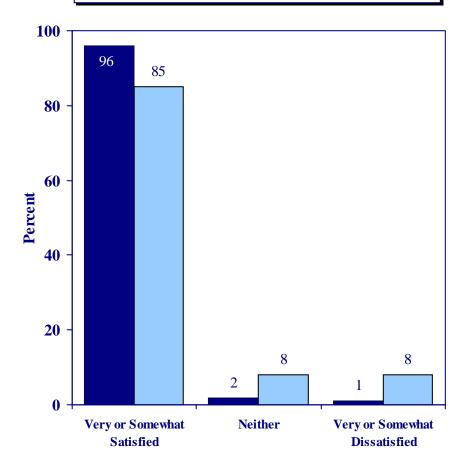


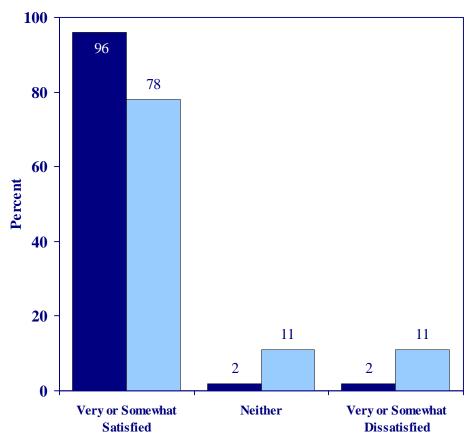
#### **Overall Satisfaction by Realtor's Knowledge about the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program**

- Excellent or Very Good Knowledge (N = 3,323)
- $\blacksquare$  Fair or Poor Knowledge (N = 862)

# Overall Satisfaction by Realtor's Responsiveness Regarding Inquiries

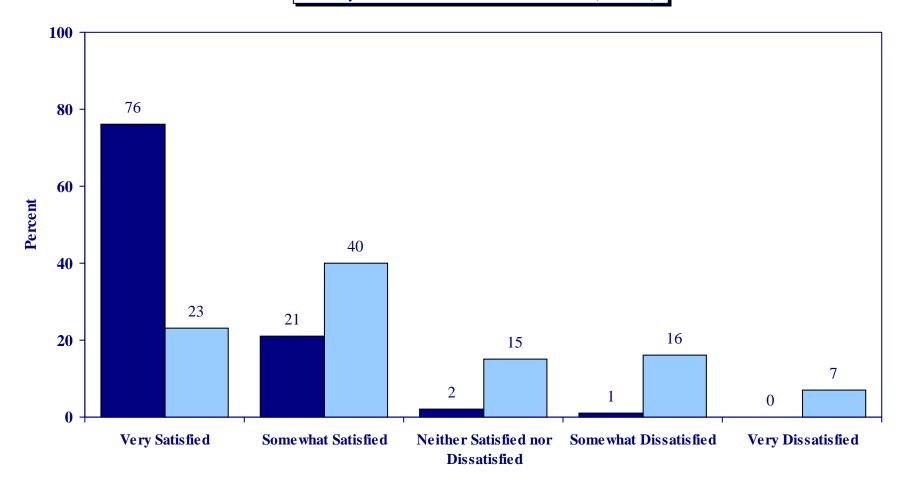
- Very or Somewhat Responsive (N = 3,999)
- $\blacksquare$  Very or Somewhat Unresponsive (N = 284)





#### Overall Satisfaction by Satisfaction with Lender

- Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Lender (N = 6,907)
- $\square$  Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied with Lender (N = 460)

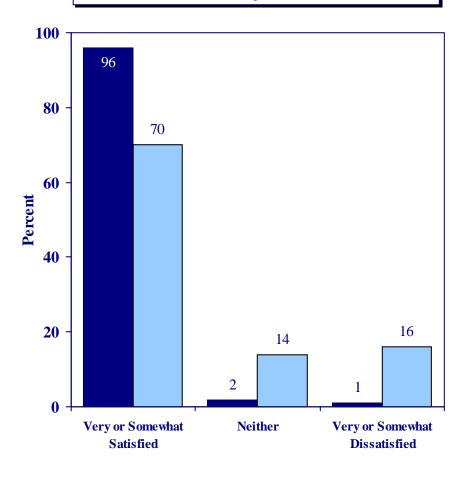


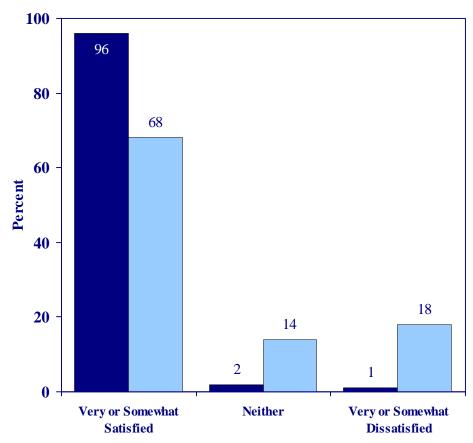
## Overall Satisfaction by Lender's Knowledge about the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program

- $\blacksquare$  Excellent or Very Good Knowledge (N = 6,309)
- $\blacksquare$  Fair or Poor Knowledge (N = 508)

# Overall Satisfaction by Lender's Responsiveness Regarding Inquiries

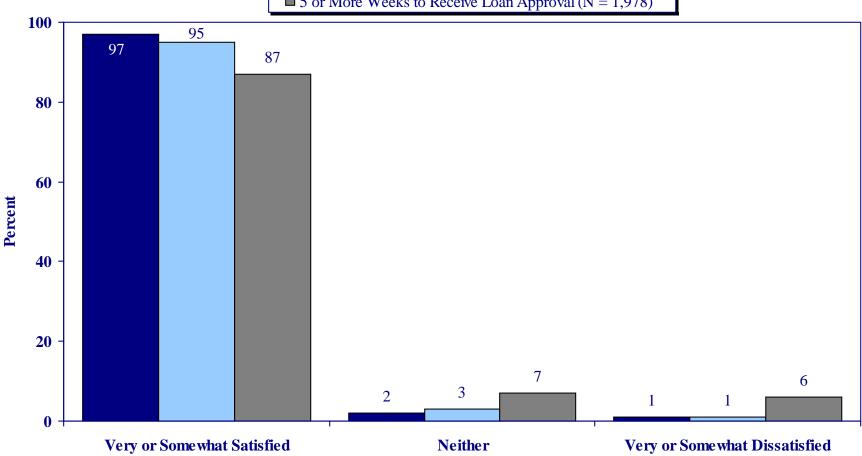
- Very or Somewhat Responsive (N = 6,410)
- $\blacksquare$  Very or Somewhat Unresponsive (N = 386)





#### **Overall Satisfaction by Time Taken to Receive Loan Approval**

- Less Than 2 Weeks to Receive Loan Approval (N = 2,809)
- $\square$  2 to 4 Weeks to Receive Loan Approval (N = 2,829)
- $\blacksquare$  5 or More Weeks to Receive Loan Approval (N = 1,978)

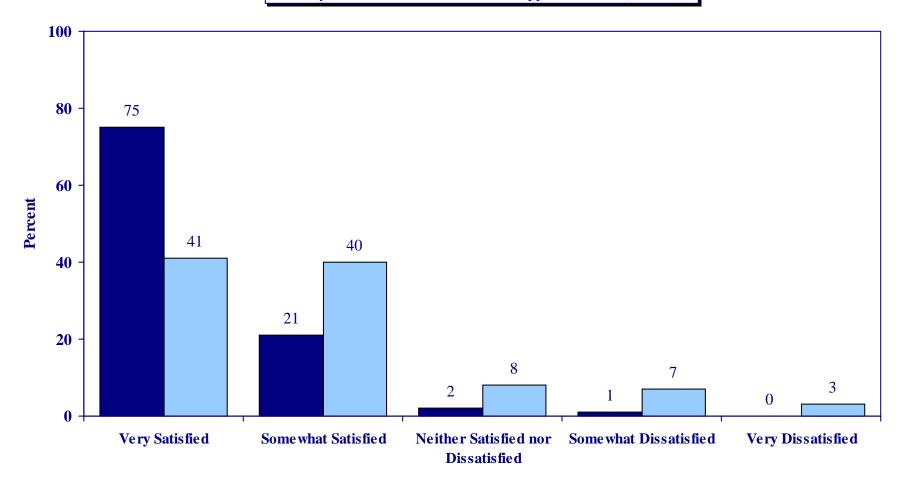


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**Overall Satisfaction by Satisfaction with the Appraised Value of the Property** 

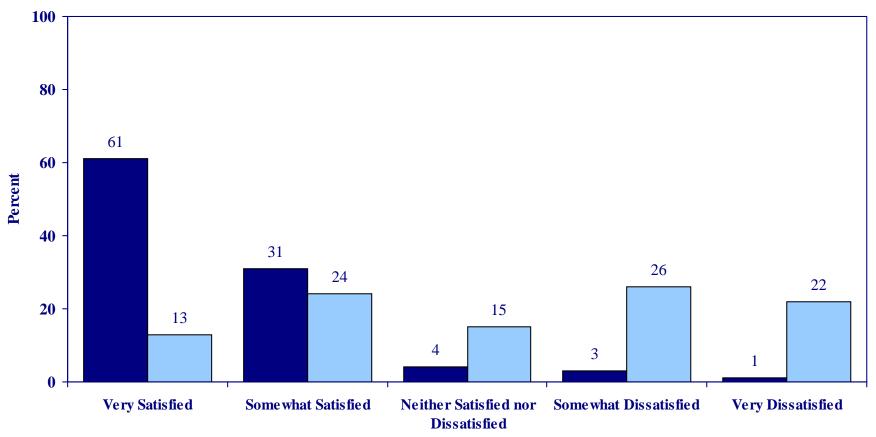
- Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Appraised Value (N = 3,287)
- $\square$  Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied with Appraised Value (N = 386)



### **Satisfaction with Appraised Value of Property**

## Satisfaction with the Appraised Value of the Property by Satisfaction with the Professionalism of the Appraiser

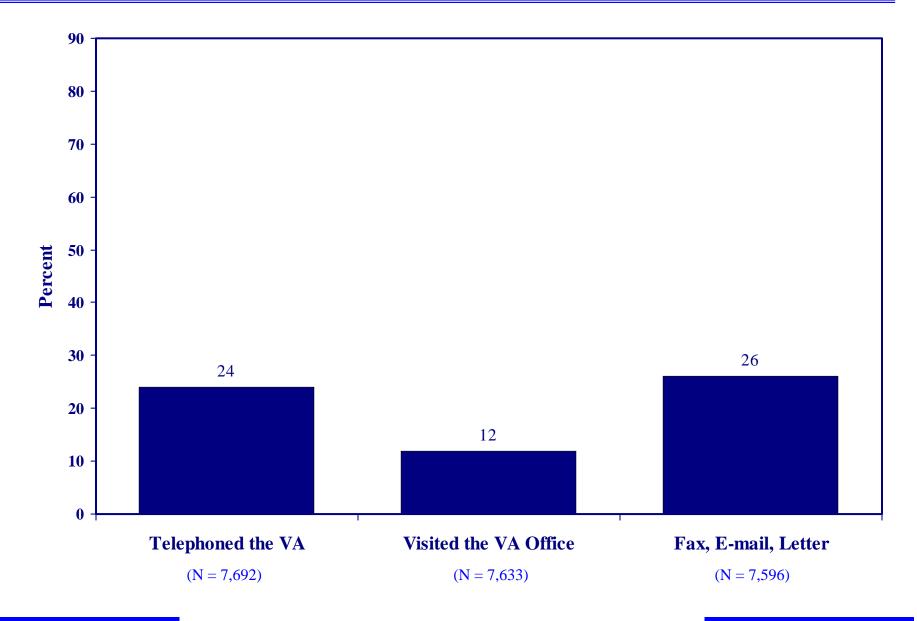
- $\blacksquare$  Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Professionalism of Appraiser (N = 1,432)
- $\square$  Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied with Professionalism of Appraiser (N = 234)



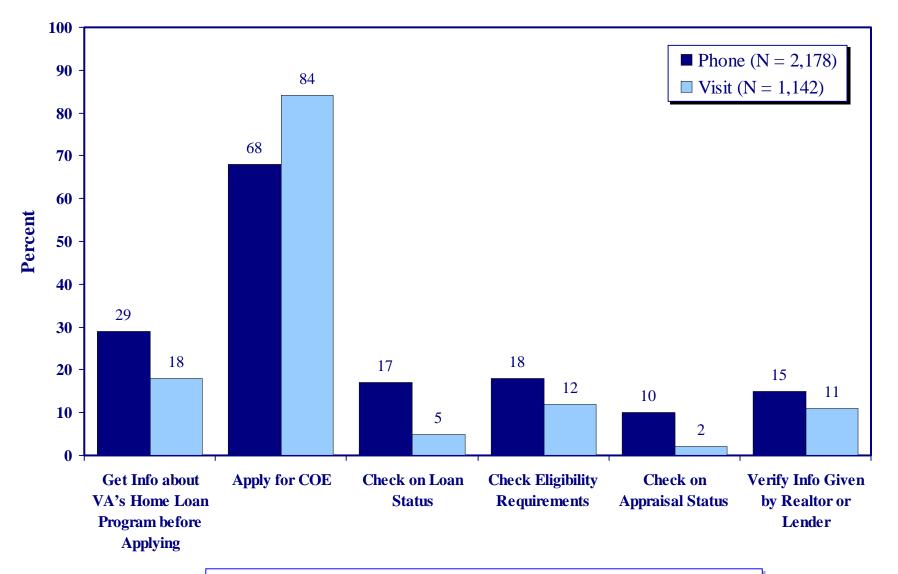
Satisfaction with the Appraised Value of the Property

### **Contact with VA**

### **Contacts with VA**

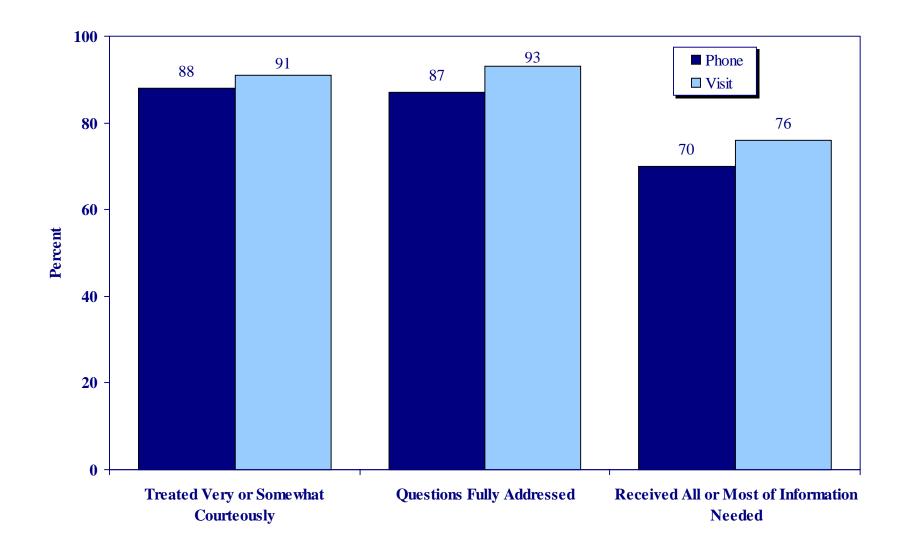


### **Reason for Contacting VA**



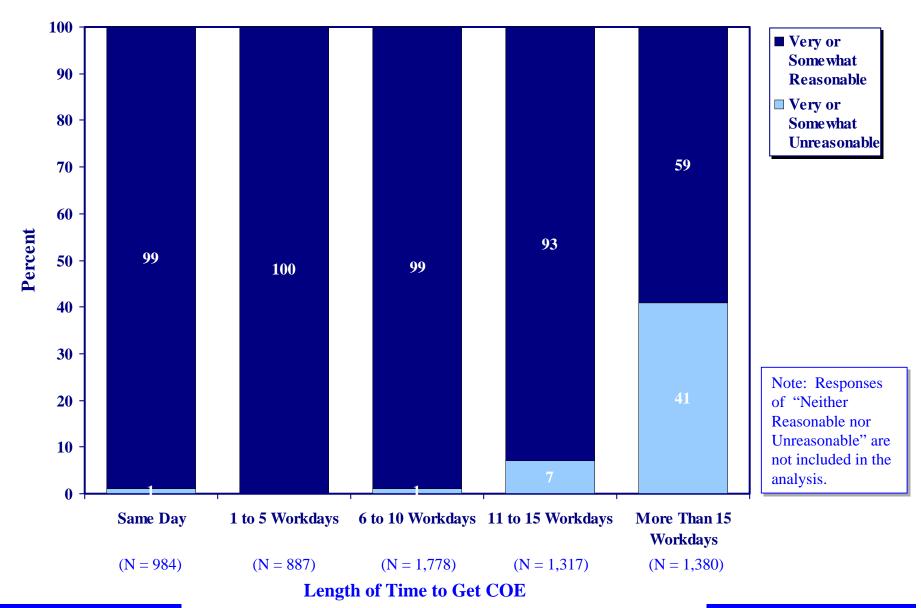
Note: As a respondent could give more than one reason, the percentages do not add to 100.

### **Selected Satisfaction Issues Regarding Contact with the VA**

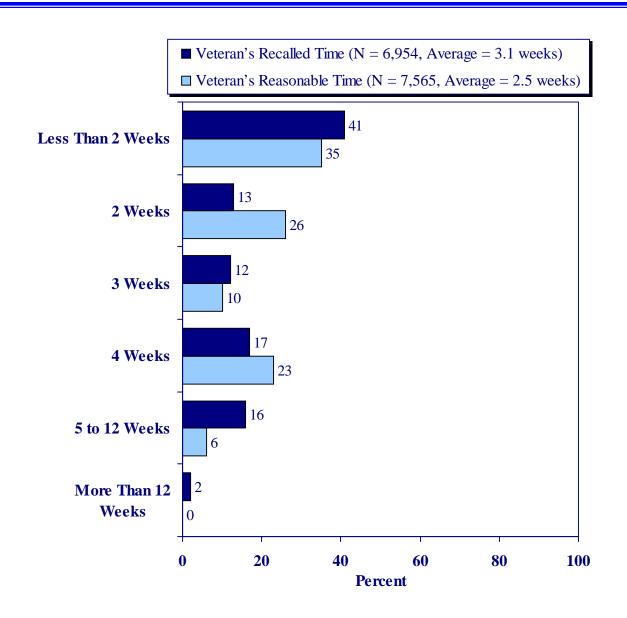


Timeliness, Responsiveness, and Knowledge

### Reasonableness of Time to Get Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

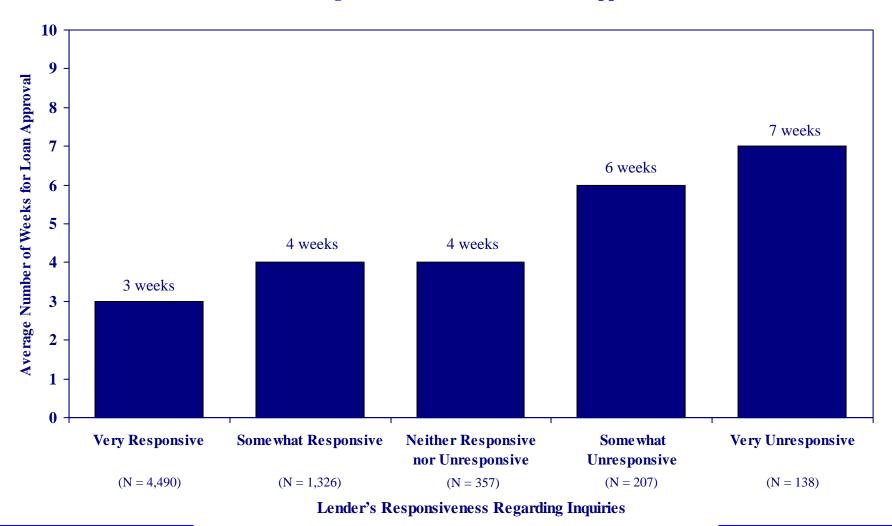


# Time Taken to Get Loan Approval



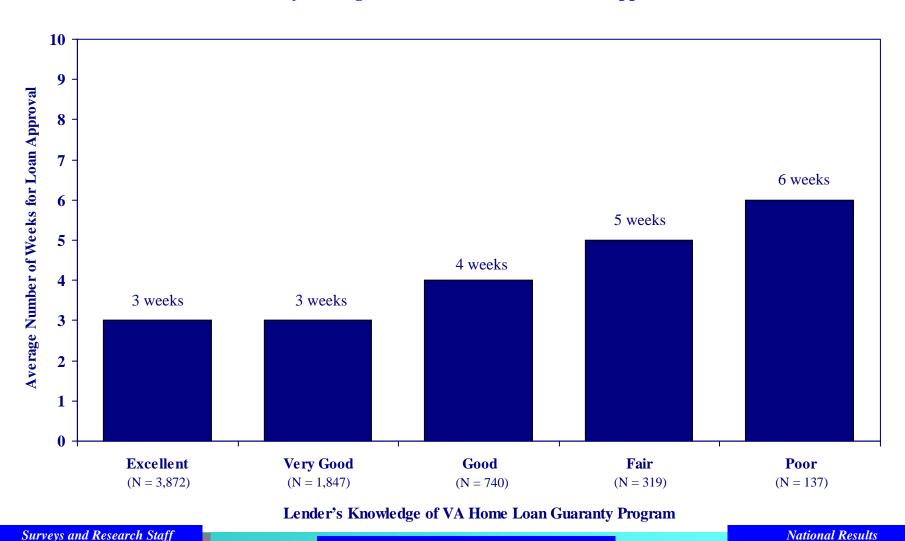
## Lender's Responsiveness by Time for Loan Approval

Lender's Responsiveness Regarding Inquiries by Average Number of Weeks For Loan Approval



# Lender's Knowledge by Time for Loan Approval

#### Lender's Knowledge of VA Home Loan Guaranty Program by Average Number of Weeks For Loan Approval



Timeliness, Responsiveness, and Knowledge — 40

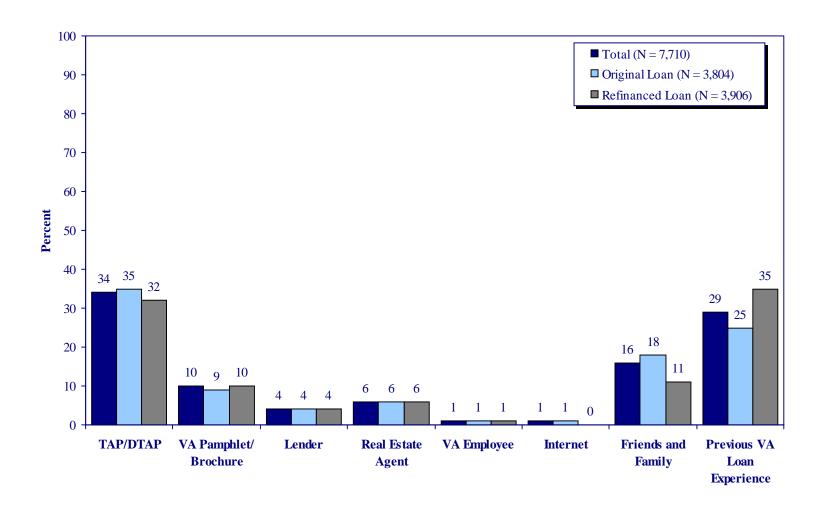
April, 2002

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**Appendix A: Frequency of Responses** 

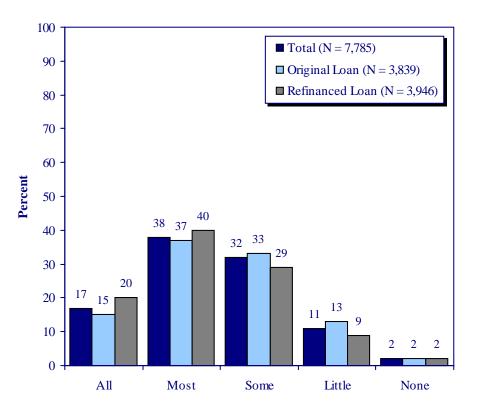
# Frequency of Responses – Background

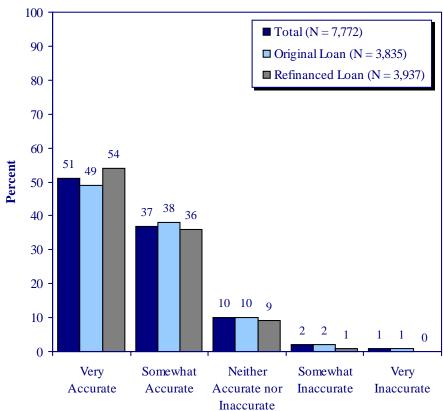
#### Q1. How did you FIRST learn about the VA home loan guaranty program?



# Frequency of Responses – Background

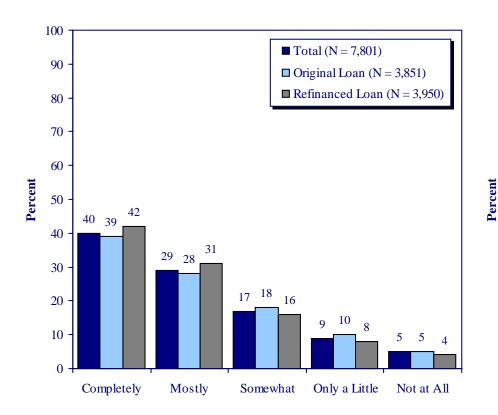
- Q2. Looking back, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from this source?
- Q3. How accurate was the information you received?

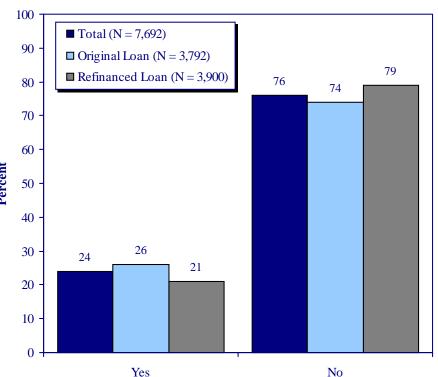




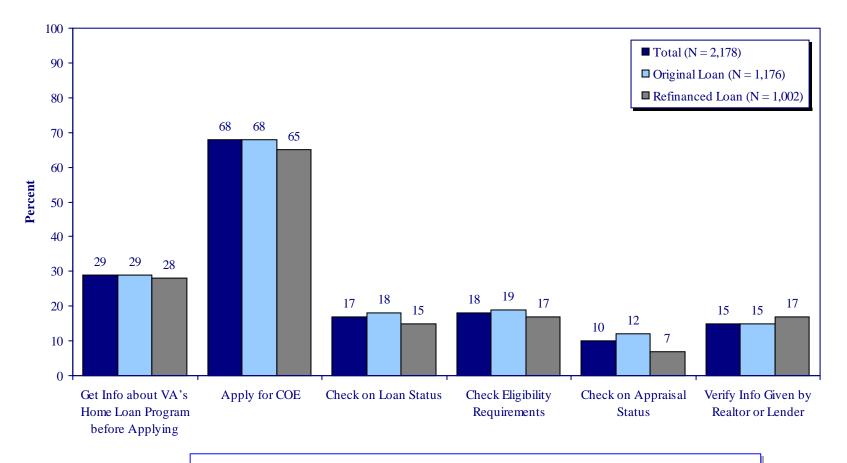
# Frequency of Responses – Background and Phone Contact

- Q4. At the beginning of the home buying process, how completely did you understand the dollar amount of the loan the VA would guarantee?
- Q5. Did you ever try to reach the VA using the toll-free number during the home buying/refinancing process?



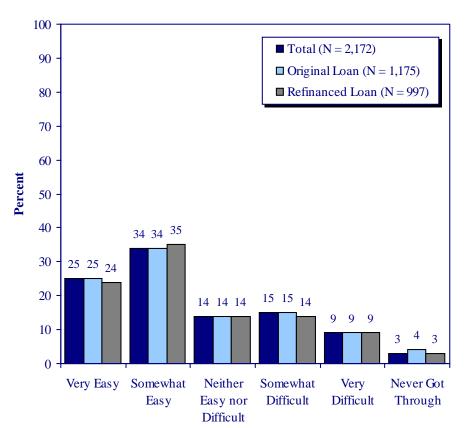


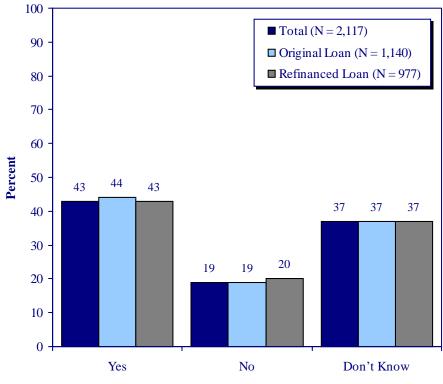
#### Q6. Why did you call VA? (Mark all that apply.)



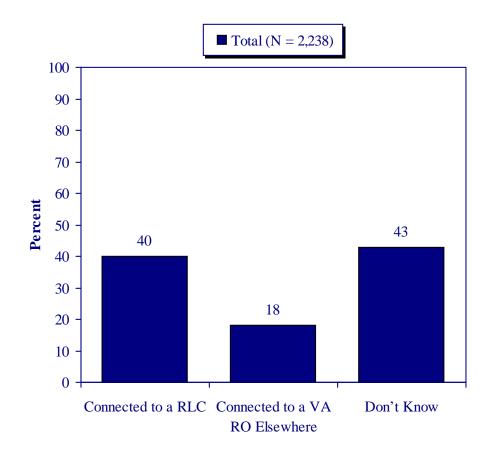
Note: As a respondent could give more than one reason, the percentages do not add to 100.

- Q7. How easy was it to get through to VA on the phone?
- Q8. When you called the toll-free number, were you connected directly to a VA Regional Loan Center?

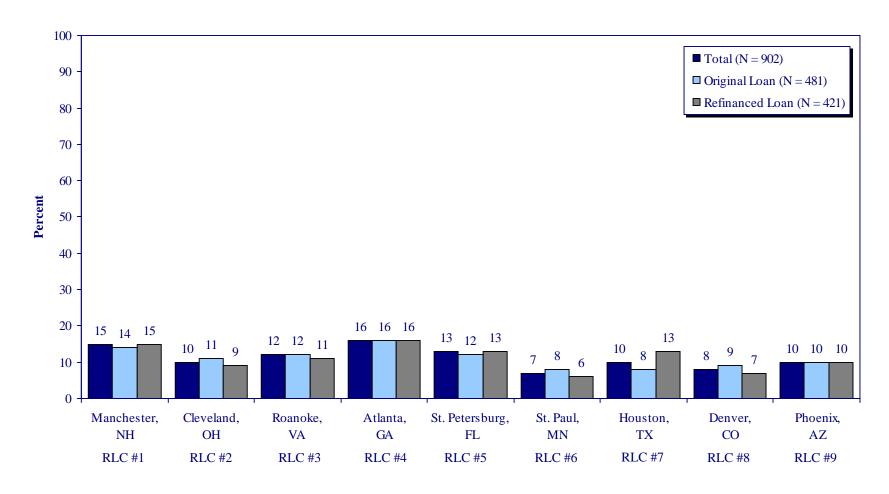




Q9a. Which, if any, of the following VA Regional Loan Centers were you connected with?

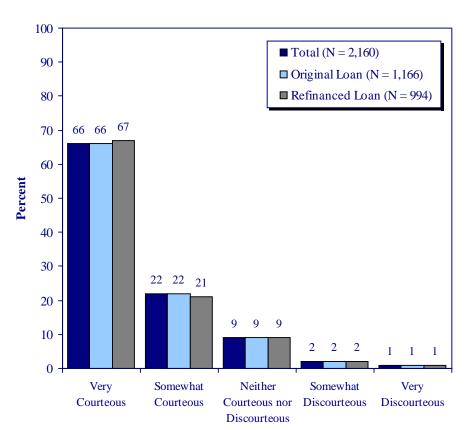


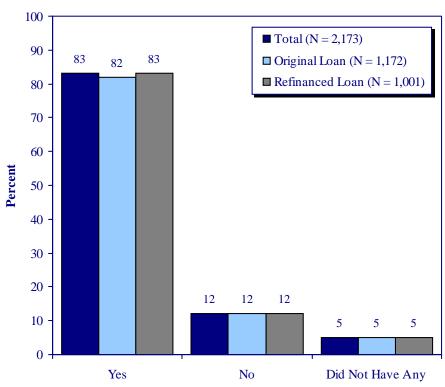
Q9b. Which, if any, of the following VA Regional Loan Centers were you connected with?



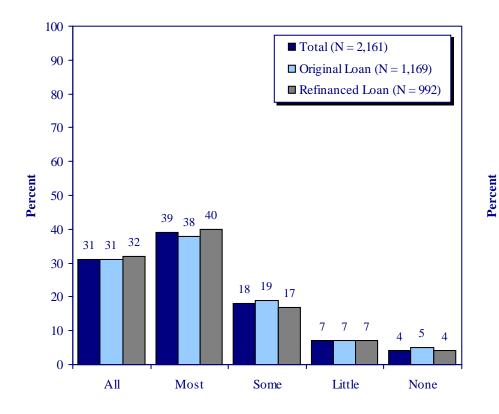
Q10. How courteous were VA employees you spoke to on the telephone?

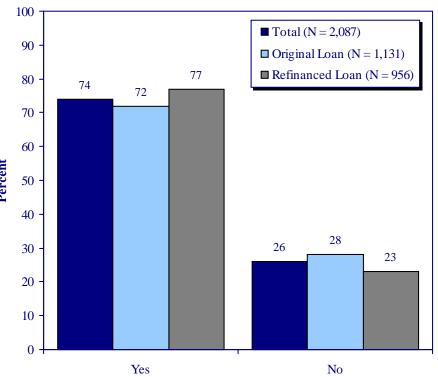
Q11. Did VA employees fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?



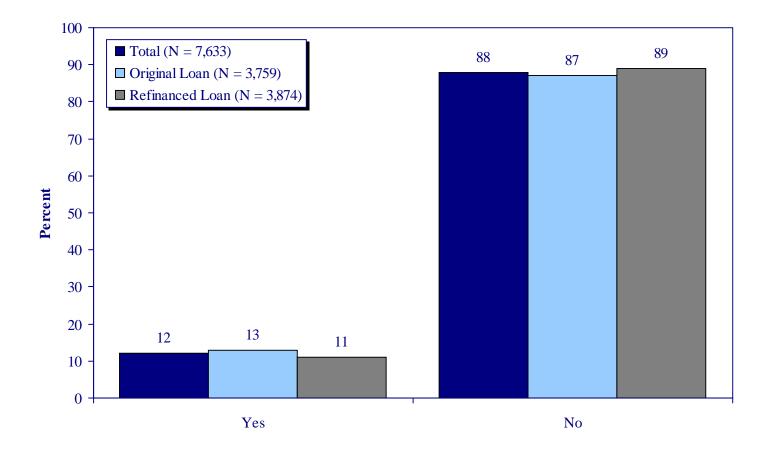


- Q12. In general, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from your telephone contact with the VA toll-free number?
- Q13. Were you able to get information about your particular loan?

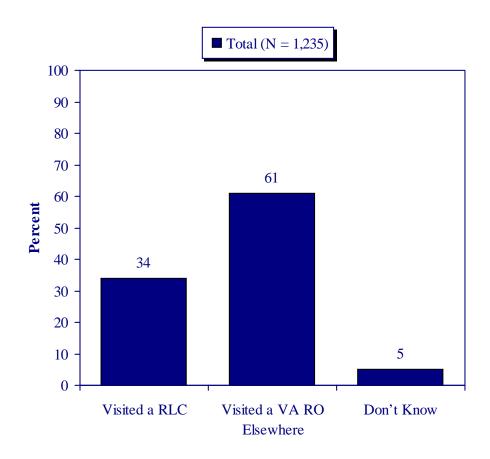




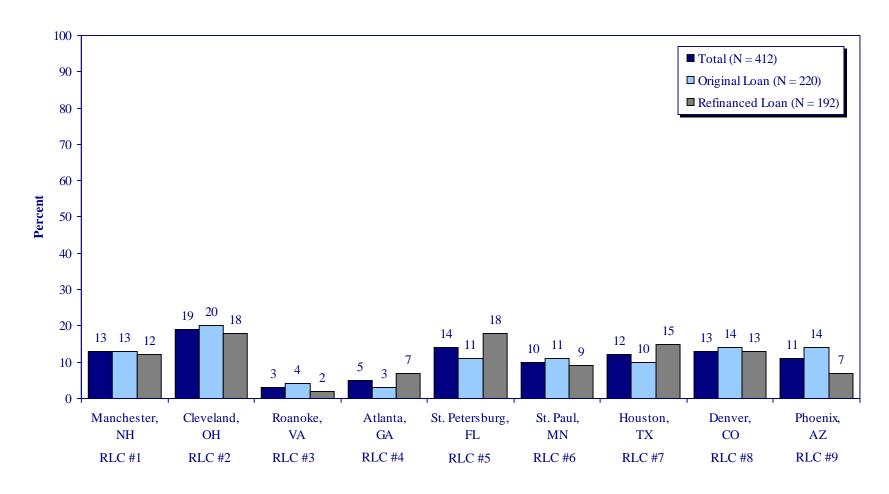
Q14. Did you ever visit a VA Regional Loan Center or Regional Office during the home buying/refinancing process?



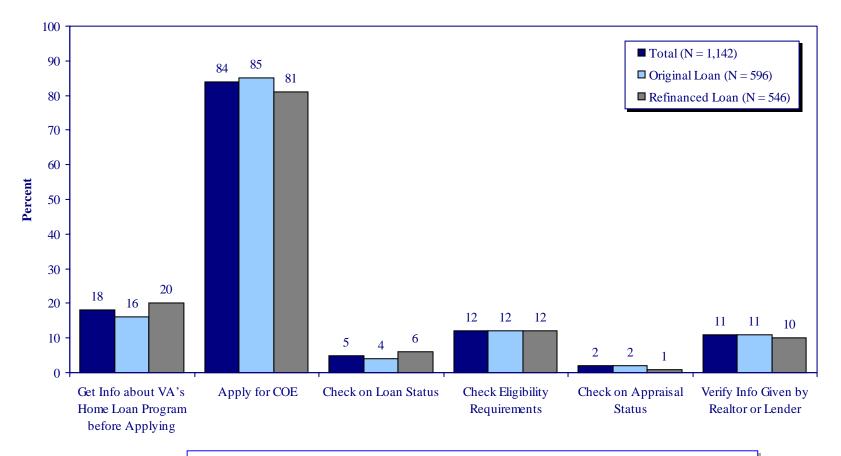
Q15a. Which, if any, of the following VA Regional Loan Centers did you visit?



Q15b. Which, if any, of the following VA Regional Loan Centers did you visit?



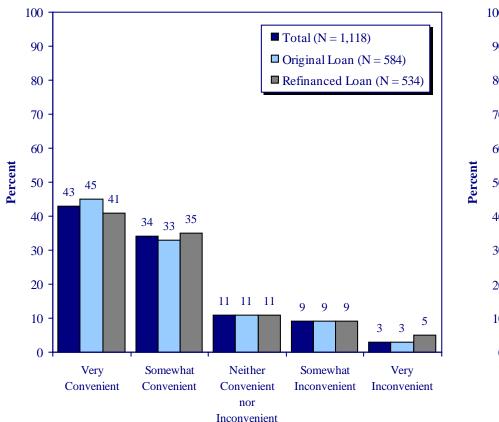
Q16. Why did you visit a VA Regional Loan Center or Regional Office? (Mark all that apply.)

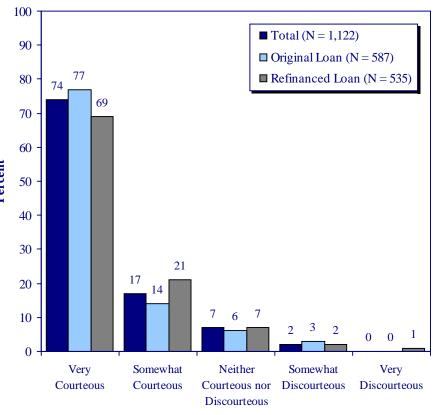


Note: As a respondent could give more than one reason, the percentages do not add to 100.

Q17. How convenient was the location of the VA Regional Loan Center or Regional Office?

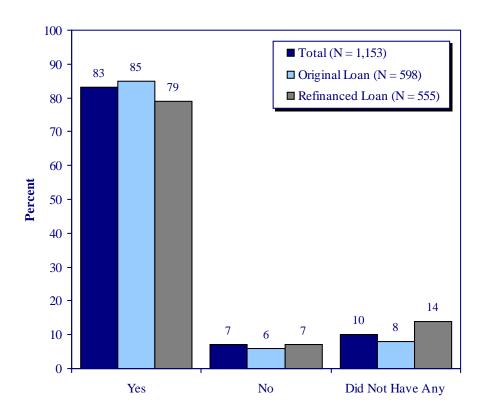
Q18. How courteous were VA employees when you visited the Regional Loan Center or Regional Office?

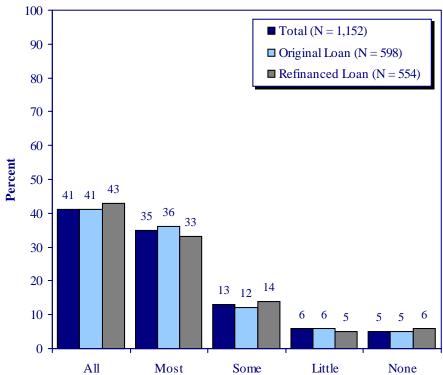




Q19. Did VA employees fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?

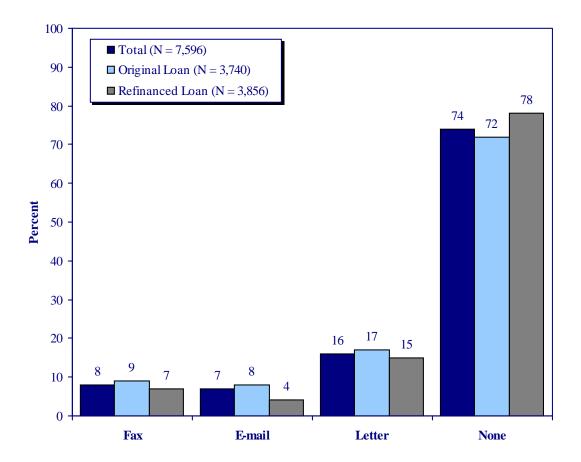
Q20. In general, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from your visit to the VA Regional Loan Center or Regional Office?





### **Frequency of Responses – Other Methods of Contact**

Q21. During the home buying/refinancing process, what methods other than phone or visit did you use to contact the VA? (Mark all that apply.)

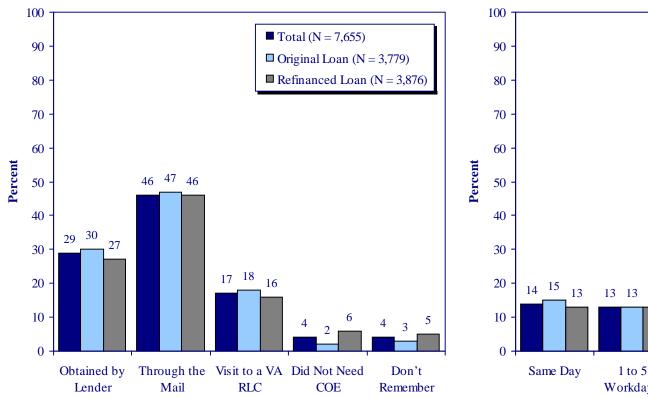


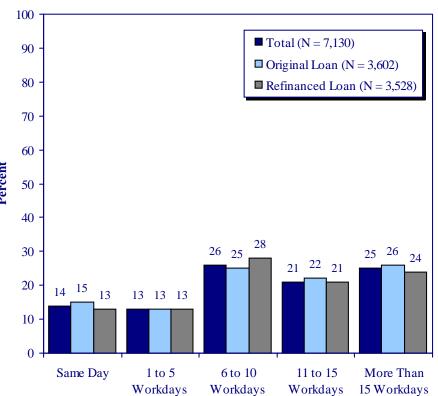
Note: As a respondent could give more than one method, the percentages do not add to 100.

# Frequency of Responses – Certificate of Eligibility

Q22. How did you obtain your Certificate of Eligibility for Loan Guaranty Benefits?

Q23. From the time you applied, how long did it take to get your Certificate of Eligibility?

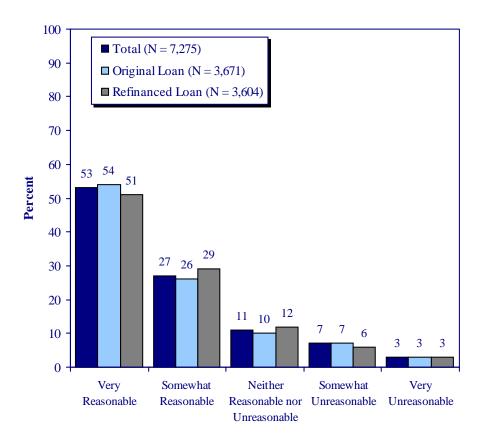


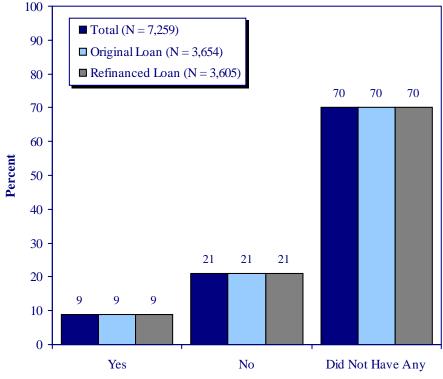


# Frequency of Responses – Certificate of Eligibility

Q24. How REASONABLE was the amount of time it took to get your Certificate of Eligibility?

Q25. Did VA keep you informed of any delays or problems in obtaining your Certificate of Eligibility (COE)?

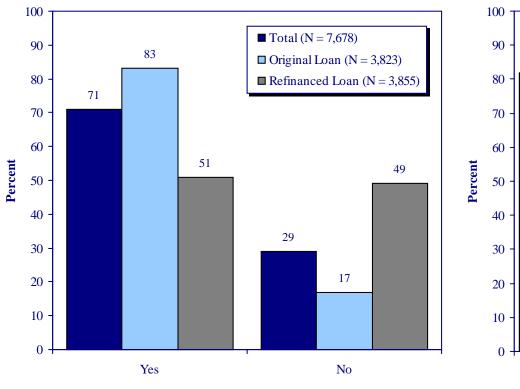


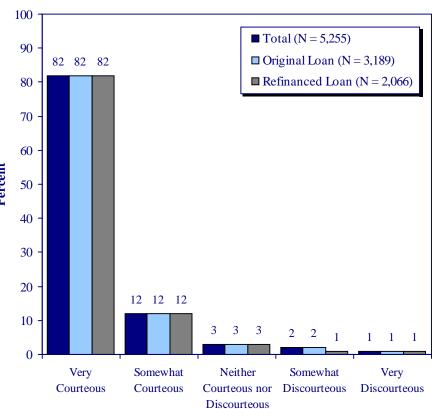


# **Frequency of Responses – Realtor**

Q26. Did you use the services of a realtor in purchasing/refinancing your home?

Q27. How courteous was the realtor you dealt with?

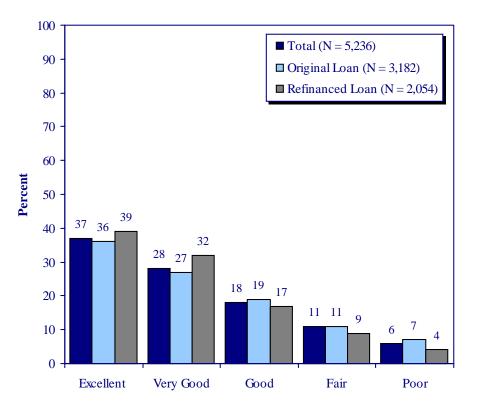


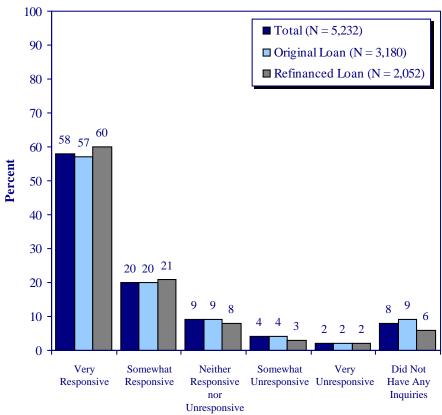


### Frequency of Responses – Realtor

Q28. How would you rate your realtor's KNOWLEDGE about the VA home loan guaranty program?

Q29. How RESPONSIVE was your realtor regarding any inquiries about your VA home loan?

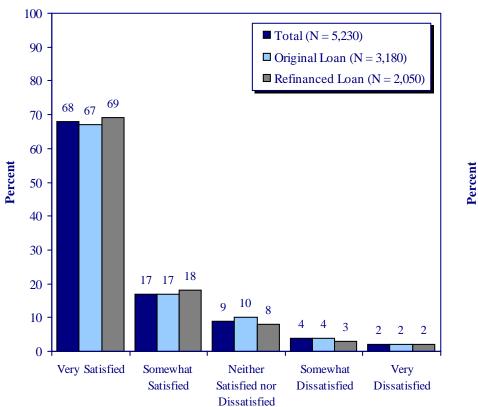


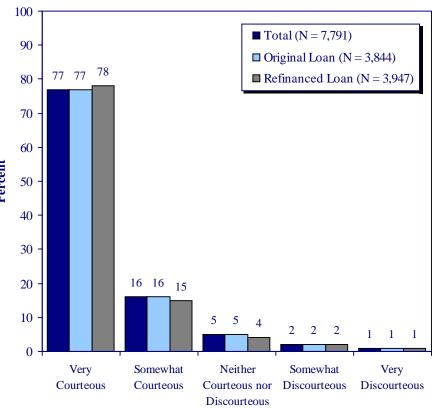


## Frequency of Responses – Realtor and Lender

Q30. Overall, how satisfied were you with your realtor regarding your use of the VA home loan guaranty program?

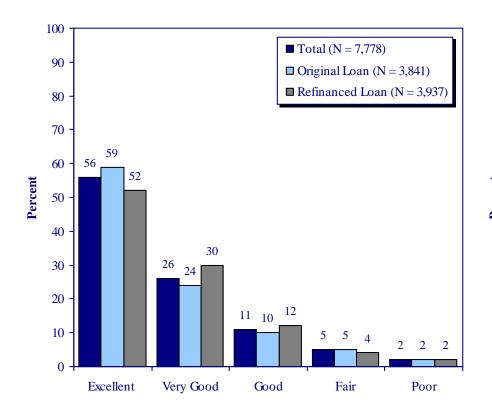
Q31. How courteous was the lender you dealt with?

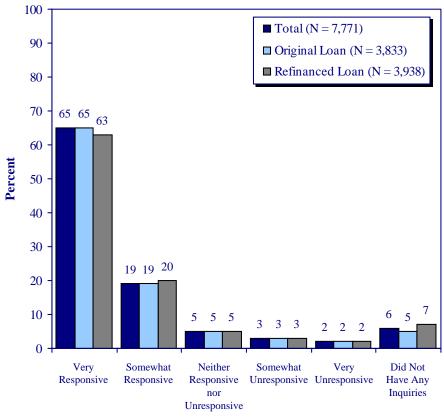




Q32. How would you rate your lender's KNOWLEDGE about the VA home loan guaranty program?

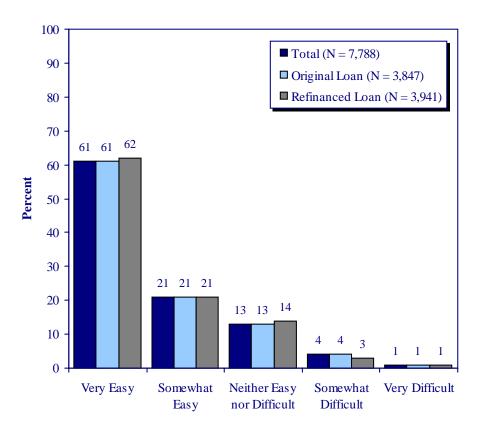
Q33. How RESPONSIVE was your lender regarding any inquiries about your VA home loan?

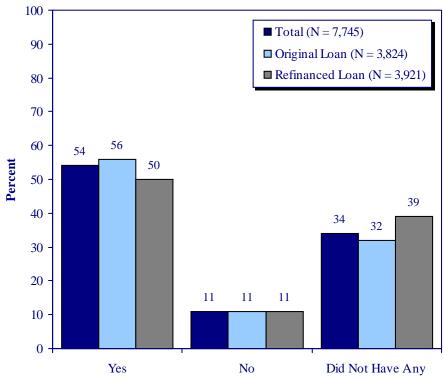




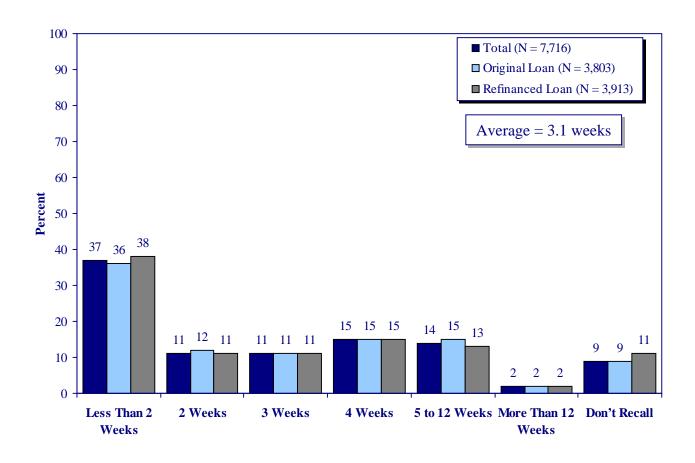
Q34. How easy was it to get information about the VA home loan guaranty program from your lender?

Q35. Did your lender keep you informed of any delays or problems with your loan?

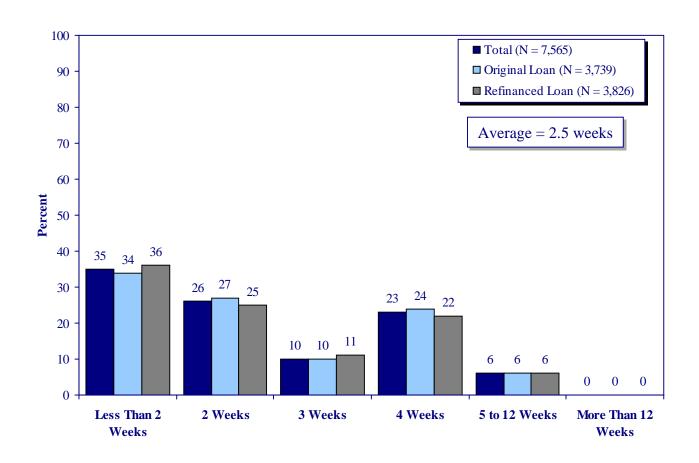




#### Q36. How long did it take for your loan to get approved?

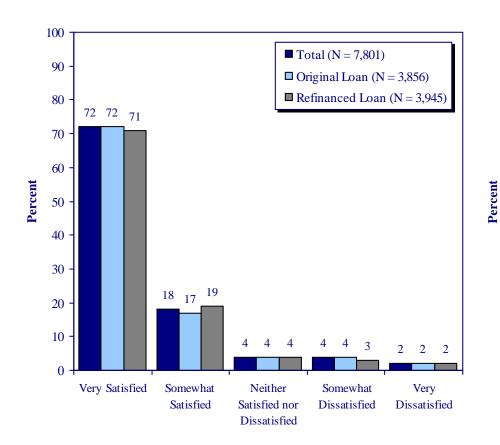


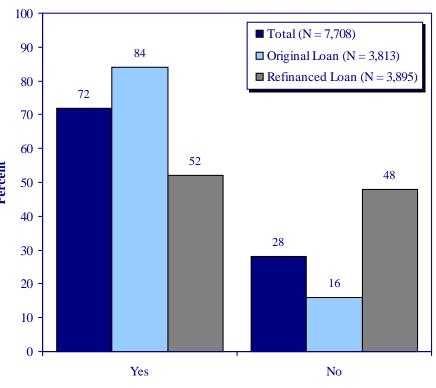
#### Q37. How long do you think is REASONABLE for your loan to get approved?



# Frequency of Responses – Lender and Appraisal

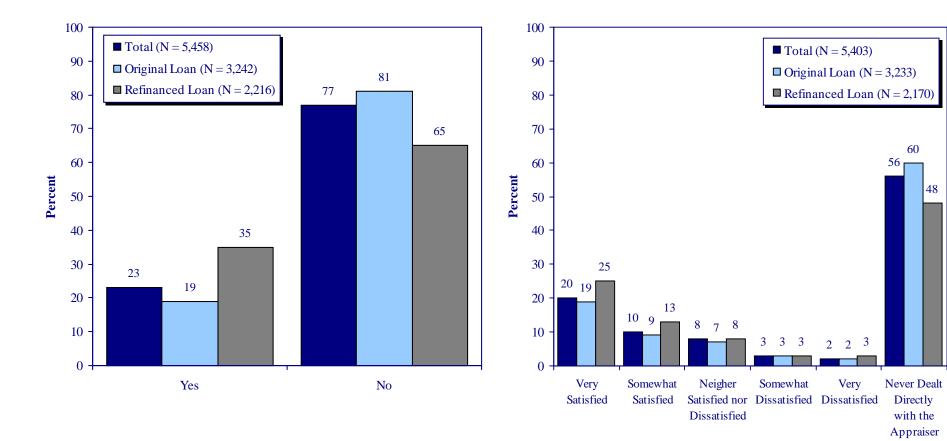
- Q38. Overall, how satisfied were you with your lender regarding your use of the VA home loan program?
- Q39. Did you have an appraisal to either buy or refinance your home?





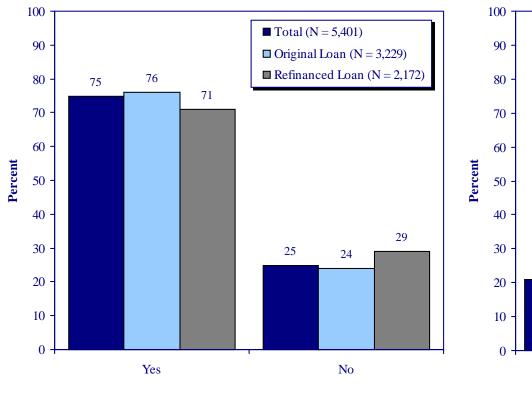
Q40. Did you, or a member of your family, personally meet the appraiser?

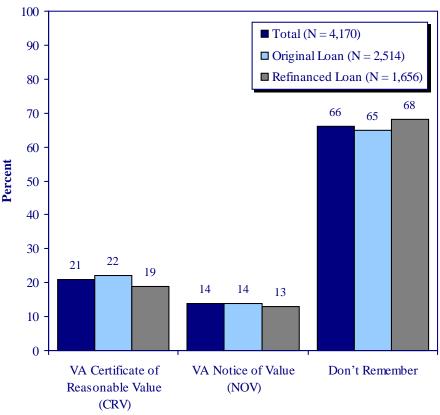
Q41. How satisfied were you with the PROFESSIONALISM of the appraiser?



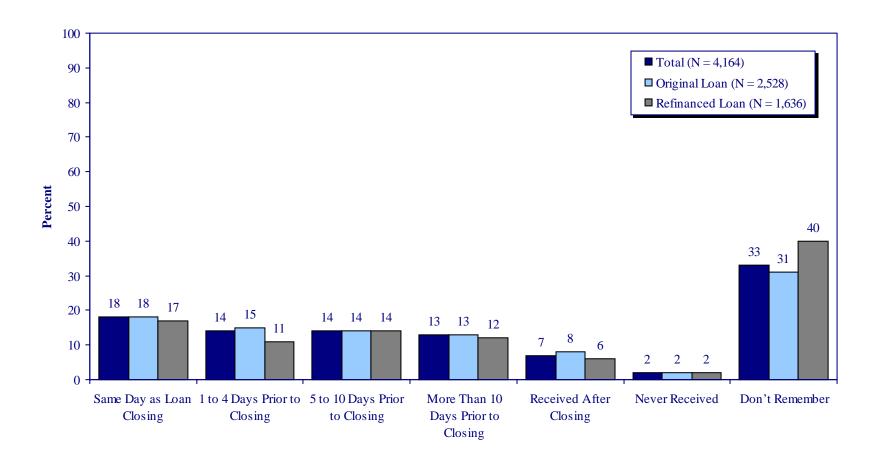
Q42. Did you receive a document showing the value estimate and other information about the property?

Q43. Which document did you receive?

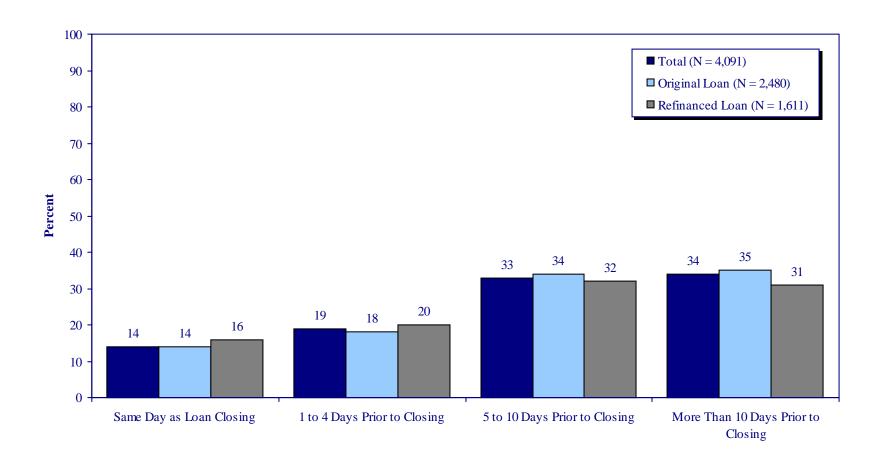




#### Q44. Relative to the closing date, when did you receive this document?

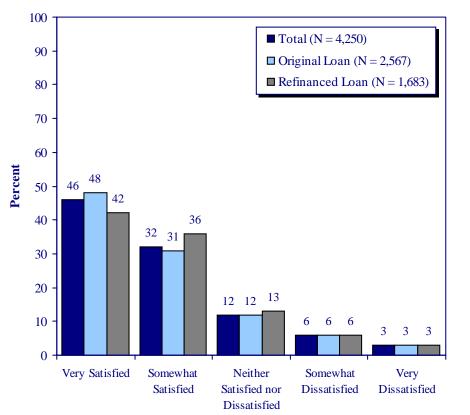


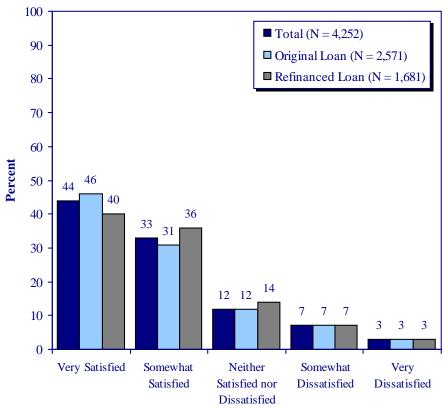
#### Q45. Relative to the closing date, when would you HAVE LIKED to receive this document?



Q46. How satisfied were you with the appraised value of your property?

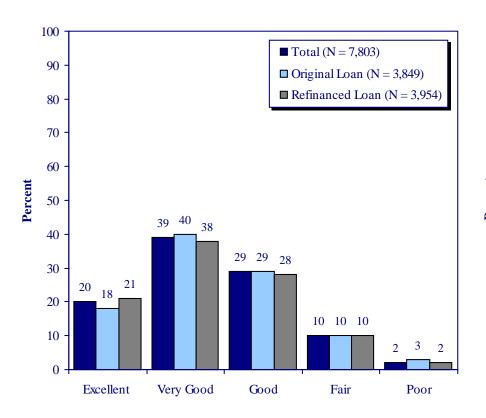
Q47. Overall, how satisfied were you with the appraisal of your property?

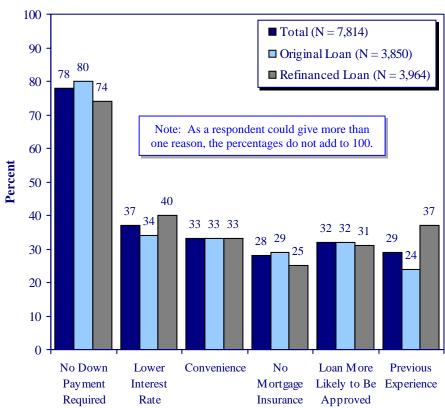




Q48. Overall, how would you rate your current knowledge of the VA home loan guaranty program?

Q49. Why did you choose to get a VA home loan? (Mark all that apply.)



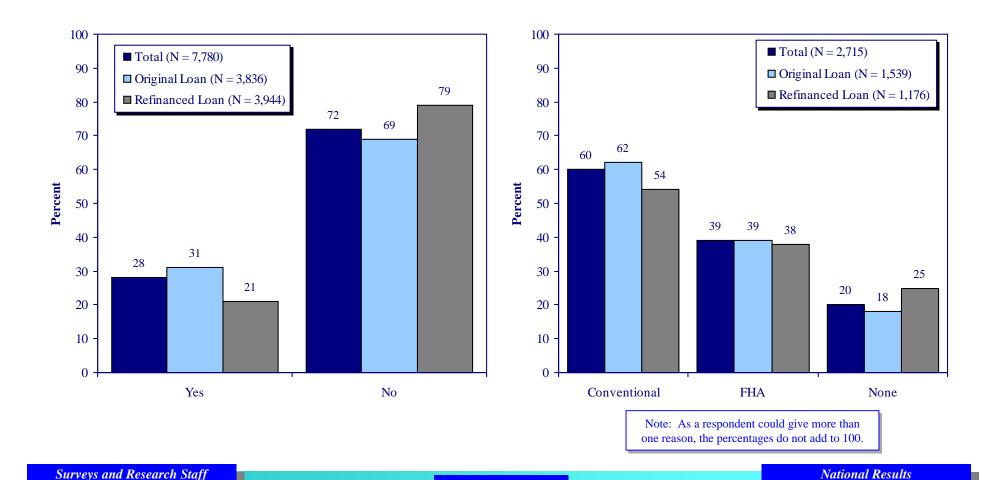


Q50. Did you consider another type of home loan?

VBA Data Management Office

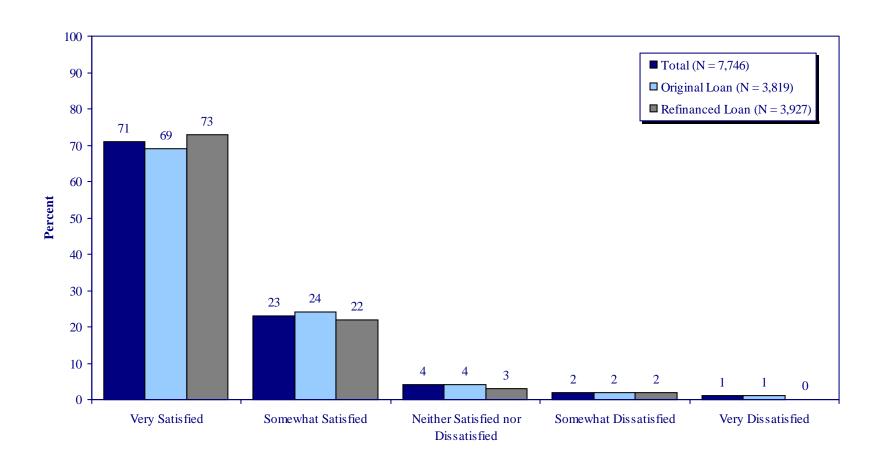
Q51. What other types of home loans did you consider? (Mark all that apply.)

April, 2002



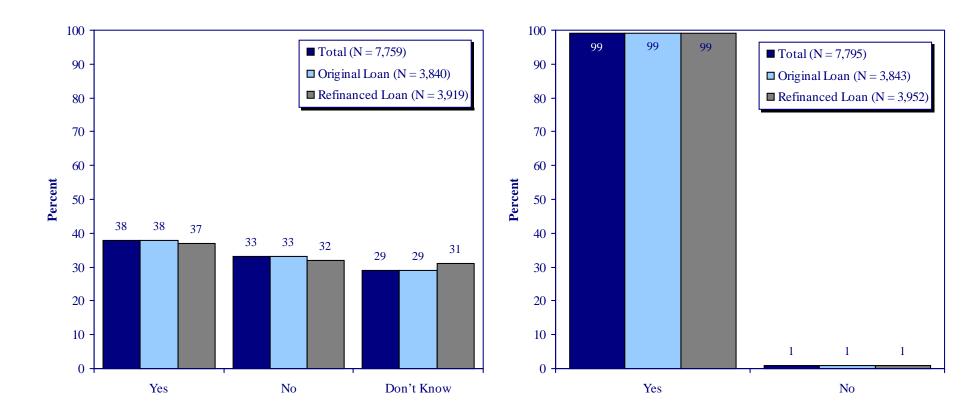
Appendix A — 33

Q52. Overall, how satisfied are you with the process of obtaining a VA home loan?



Q53. If you had not received a VA guaranteed home loan, would you have been able to purchase your home at this time?

Q54. Would you recommend the VA home loan program to other veterans?



# Appendix B: Methodology

#### **Methodology**

- The goal of the 2001 survey administration was to obtain 400 completed questionnaires per loan type for each of the nine VBA Regional Loan Centers. Assuming a 60 percent response rate, approximately 700 names and addresses were needed to reach this goal. The expected response rate was based on the results of the previous years' surveys, where an average of 62 percent of all persons who were sent a questionnaire responded.
- The potential respondents are persons who recently received a VA home loan or recently refinanced their original VA home loan and whose loans were serviced by the 9 Regional Loan Centers.
- The Surveys and Research Staff created a file of closed loans starting from approximately March 1, 2001, to July 31, 2001. The addresses were run through the National Change of Address (NCOA) program to detect undeliverable addresses.
- The names and addresses that were used for the Regional Loan Centers were randomly selected within each loan type (original or refinanced). Any veterans living abroad were excluded from the survey. A Spanish language version of the survey was provided to veterans residing in Puerto Rico.

#### Weighting

#### **Reasons for Weighting**

• When response rates for customer segments are disproportionate to their representation in the entire population, it is necessary to weight the segment responses during analyses to ensure that they remain representative of the entire population.

#### **Weighting Variables for National VA Home Loan Guaranty Process**

We have used Regional Loan Centers and type of loan as weighting variables.

#### **Questionnaire Mailing Protocol**

- The questionnaire design consisted of five mailings to sampled individuals or households. These included: 1) a pre-notification letter telling potential respondents that they should expect to receive a mailed survey questionnaire; 2) a copy of the questionnaire, including a standard return envelope; 3) a reminder/thank you postcard; 4) a second copy of the questionnaire mailed to those who had not yet responded; and 5) a reminder/thank you postcard following the second mailing. Examples of these materials appear in Appendix C.
- The questionnaires were sent in window envelopes which displayed the veteran's address. Each envelope contained a cover letter on VBA letterhead, a questionnaire, and a pre-posted envelope addressed to National Computer Systems (NCS), the subcontractor administering the survey. Toll-free numbers for both NCS and the VA were also included to help field respondents' questions.
- These mailings took place on the dates indicated below.

Mail Survey Schedule		
Prenotification Letter	November 21, 2001	
First Questionnaire	November 29, 2001	
First Reminder Postcard	December 5, 2001	
Second Questionnaire	January 16, 2002	
Second Reminder Postcard	January 24, 2002	
Fieldwork Completed	February 12, 2002	

#### **Response Rates**

- The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed questionnaires by the number of eligible questionnaires. Generally, a response rate of 70 percent or more is considered excellent, 60 to 69 percent is considered very good, 50 to 59 percent is considered good, 40 to 49 percent is considered fair, and any response rate less than 40 percent is considered poor. Without further information, results derived from a survey with a response rate of less than 50 percent should be interpreted with caution.
- Eligible questionnaires are those which were returned completed, which were returned blank or incomplete, which were returned with an indication that the recipient had not recently had a VA home loan approved or which were not returned.
- Ineligible questionnaires are those which were returned undeliverable, which were returned with an indication that the respondent was unable to complete the survey, or which were returned with an indication that the recipient was deceased.

Response Rates by Year	
Year	Response Rate (Percent)
2001	56
2000	62

# **Response Rates (continued)**

National Response Rate		
Total Sample Mailed	14,335	
Total Ineligible	348	
Undeliverables	346	
Deceased	2	
Total Eligible	13,987	
Blank or incomplete	27	
Did not have VA home loan approved	15	
Refusal (Did Not Return)	6,088	
Total Completed	7,857	
Response Rate	56%	

Response Rates		
RLC #1	60%	
RLC #2	58%	
RLC #3	54%	
RLC #4	54%	
RLC #5	56%	
RLC #6	60%	
RLC #7	53%	
RLC #8	56%	
RLC #9	53%	
National Response Rate	56%	

**Appendix C: Examples of Mailing Materials** 

#### Figure A: Prenotification Letter



DEFARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Vitament Empetts Administration
Weshington DC 20428

November 21, 2001

Dear Venezali

As part of its organic commutator to improving service, the Department of Veterusi Affairs (VA), Venezus Boseffis Administration (VBA), is conducting a randomer satisfaction survey of persons. like yourself, who here incently recovered a VA home loss giantate, or recountly refinanced their VA home loss.

This better is comply to let you know you have been arisected to participate in this curvey. In about a work, you will be receiving a questionisairo in the small.

The survey is completely confidential and #ill out affect your benefits in any way. A unional research organization, NCS Pranson, is combacting this survey for VA.

Your help with the survey is very important — VX needs to learn about your experience on that we can improve our home loss guaranty process. Please take the time to complien and return the questionnaire when it arrives.

I would like to sold how much we appreciate your assistance with this important project. Your participation will bein so to continue to improve the important service to receive.

Stircontry years.

Ony 11, McMichael III Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

P.S. For information regarding NA herefore, I traine you to visit our VA Home Page on the World Wide Web as http://www.va.gov/vjs.the Internet. For information about customernatiofaction version, go to http://www.vba.va.gov/surveys/.

PNE

#### Figure B: Questionnaire Cover Letter



DEPARTMENT OF VETERARS AFFAIRS Victoriana Deneffile Automissionalism Washington DC 20425

Nimindial 29, 2001

Dear Voterian

Disclosed in the spotsticentains I wrote to you about recently. As purt of our commitment to improving service, the Department of Veterano Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), is conducting a customer satisfaction survey of persons, like yourself, who have recently received a VA home loss, or recently refinanced their VA better bean.

Your answers are very important because you have personal experience with VA and its process for receiving a VA home loan. You were selected for the survey as part of a sational satisfie of persons who recently applied for or renewed this benefit. Survey findings will be reported to embedded VA Regional Louis Certain and policy-makers in the Vineruss Benefits Administration:

It is important for you to know that your answers will not affect your current or biture benefits. While I sincerely argu you to complete the survey, should you skeale not to participate, your eligibility for any future vesurates benefits will not be affected in are way.

Please extremiber, your answers will be confidential. VA has asked NCS Protons, as independent. national research organization, to conduct the survey. After gathering information from the survey, NCS Process will remove your mater and any other identifying information before previating the organ data to VA. There is no way your answers will be linked to you.

If you have questions about this survey or the questionness itself, please call an NCS Prayson representative at 1 400-403-0020. You may also wish to call your local VA Regional Office at 1-890-827-1000

By hidging on, we can improve our service to you and the many others who have served our colority. so well. Thank you in advance for helping or in this important work.

Guy H. McMichel III. Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

Tinclessore.

P.S. For information regarding VA benefits, I inverse you to visit out VA House Page on the World Wide Web at http://www.va.gov/ via the Internet. For information about currency satisfaction surveys, go to http://www.vha.va.gov/survegs/.

CLIE

## Figure C: Reminder/Thank You Post Card



#### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

Recently, we mailed a survey to you as part of a study of customer satisfaction with the VA Home Loan Guaranty Process.

- · If you have returned the survey, thank you.
- . If not, please take a few minutes now to complete and return the survey.
- If you have lost or misplaced the survey, or if you have questions, please call NCS Pearson at 1-800-403-0920.

#### THANK YOU!



### Figure D: Second Questionnaire Cover Letter



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANE APPAIRS
Veterans Benefits Advivoustration
Westington DC 20420

January 16, 2002

Dear Veteran.

About a menth ago, we sent you a prestourner at part of a national study of customer satisfaction with the VA house loan guaranty process. In case you did not mainteen the name loss your questionnaire, a replacement is inclosed. If you have already mailled in your completed questionnaire, please do not complete this one. However, if you have not yet replace. I are writing again requesting your help in this important study. Your participation will not affect your current or future benefits, but your attitudes and expectance can being to improve the VA benefits process for you and others in the fature.

Visa were adjected to participate in this survey as part of a sational sample of persons who recently interested a VA home loan generate, or recently refinanced their VA home loan. Your answers are very important become you have personal experience with the VA and its benefits process. We really wait to know your experiences—poor, bad, or indifferent—because they will help us better understand what parts of the process are working well and, frankly, what parts need to be fixed. The survey findings will be reported to the individual VA Regional Loan Conters and policy-makers in the Vistorius Tenefits Administration.

Remetaber, your answers will be confidential. VA has mixed NCS Pearson, at independent research representation, to conduct the survey. If you have any questions about this survey or the questionness totall, please and a representative from NCS Pearson at 1-800-403-0920 or call VA at 1-800-827-1000.

Again, if you have not yet replood, please take the time to complient this quantismanier and rearn it in the surfused myelope. By helping as, we can improve me service to you and the many others who have served our country as well. We look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Guy H. McMichael III Arting Under Secretary for Benefits

Enclosure

P.S. For information regarding VA benefits, Univide you to visit our VA Hieros Page on the World Wale Web at http://www.va.gov/ via the Internet. For information about material carbonic surveys, go to http://www.vba.va.gov/surveys/.

CLJ-E

Appendix D: VBA Home Loan Guaranty Process Questionnaire